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Total children in county under age 6: 5,230 or 7.8% of total population.

Children under age 6 living in poverty: 24.3%

Darlington County Highlights

- Early Reading First grant supported a transition program for 72 preschoolers which strengthen literacy skills and parent awareness.. "This first-ever program enhanced learning for our preschoolers and increased their level of school readiness", according to Evelyn Patterson , Head Start Director

Darlington County First Steps Partnership

Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

This report reflects the diligent work of the former Executive Director, Mrs. Mamie Bostic, the many committed Darlington County partners, the dedicated Board of Directors and expert staff of Darlington County First Steps. This report captures the accomplishments and outcomes of the past year while acknowledging there is a renewed, shared vision to move Darlington County forward. This renewed, shared vision embraces the guiding principles of the First Steps Enabling Legislation and embodies our commitment as a supportive community partner and advocate. It is through this renewed, shared visioning that we, the Board of Directors, community partners, and staff, will move forward in a positive, forthright manner to ensure we operate a cost-effective and efficient customer-driven organization. It is an honor for me to join this team and become a part of this renewed, shared vision for our youngest learners.

**In the spirit of excellence, I am,
Darnell Byrd-McPherson, L.B.S.W.
Executive Director
Darlington County First Steps**

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2007-08 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING.

Parents as Teachers

Program description: Parents as Teachers is the leading early childhood parent education and family support model which serves families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten. The Darlington County program services began with the hiring of two (2) parent educators in November and December, 2007, therefore, program services did not commence until P.A.T. certification trainings were completed in January, 2008 and services to families began at that point. Certification on the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) assessment tool was also completed in January, 2008. The delay in program start-up is indicated in the statistical datum reported herein. The goal of our Partnership is to work collaboratively with the Office of Adult Education and the Department of Social

Services to target our most vulnerable families and children, while offering services to others families referred to us through the Darlington County Coordinating Council membership.

- Number of families served: 33
- Average age of children receiving services- two (2) years of age
- Families are administered a pre and post assessment utilizing the “Keys To Interactive Parenting Scales (KIPS) which measures, among other things, the Caregiver’s words and actions, how actively the Caregiver engages the child in language experiences, and how well the Caregiver adapts strategies to the child’s interest levels.
- Based on the level of intensity in the short term provision of the PAT program, the KIPS results indicate the quality of parenting to children improved from low to moderate level. Families were enrolled an average of three and one-half (3.5) months and received an average of one (1) visit per month; therefore, one-third (1/3) of the families received the required number of visits per month. Consequently, one-half (50%) of the families served received the meeting duration requirement.

QUALITY CHILD CARE.

Child Care Facility Quality Enhancement

The goal of this strategy is to increase the capacity of our child care partners to operate in a competitive environment through the provision of on-site technical assistance and needed resources of materials and supplies. During this fiscal year technical assistance was provided to child care facilities working to achieve accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

- Seven (7) child care facilities were targeted to receive services.
- One (1) child care facility obtained D. S. S. licensure
- Six (6) child care facilities began the self-study process in an effort to meet standards for accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Four hundred sixty-nine (469) children benefitted from services provided to the seven (7) child care facilities.
- Classroom materials and supplies were provided to two (2) ABC Enhanced child care facilities: Thompson’s Unique Learning Center which serves sixteen (16) children less than 5 years of age and New Visions/Magnolia Center which serves forty-five (45) children under the age of 5.

This strategy included provision of CCCC certified childcare training to two hundred ninety-one (291) teachers. The training covered topics required for child care licensure renewal and allowed for the support of an Early Childhood Education Regional Conference which brought together providers from at least six (6) surrounding counties.

EARLY EDUCATION.

Four Year Old Kindergarten – Full day program

This strategy is an ongoing partnership developed with the Darlington County School District and expands opportunities for children to receive full day services in a public school setting.

Program results:

- Nineteen (19) of Twenty slots were filled
- Four (4) of nineteen (19) were non-English speaking children
- Eighteen (18) health screenings were completed
- Four (4) families were referred and received needed social services assistance
- Seventeen (17) of nineteen (19) families received a home visit from the child's teacher
- Sixteen (16) of nineteen (19) families participated in conferences held at the school
- Six (6) families were represented at school-based training sessions for parents
- Fifteen (15) families participated in other school-based activities, including American Education Week
- Nine (9) children were represented by their grandparents during Grandparents Day

S.C. Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)

CDEPP offers state-paid tuition of 4-year-old kindergarten classes to eligible students living in the 37 trial and plaintiff school districts involved in the school funding equity lawsuit, *Abbeville et al. vs. South Carolina*. First Steps oversees CDEPP 4K classes offered in non-public school environments. To qualify for state-paid tuition, a student's family must qualify for TANF or free/reduced-price lunch, be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2007, and live in an eligible school district.

- Seven (7) students served
- One (1) provider offers CDEPP 4K classes

SCHOOL TRANSITION.

Countdown to Kindergarten

This strategy ensures a level of continuity of services to four-year old children who have participated in either Project Head Start or Four Year Old Kindergarten classes. Parents and children are engaged in a process of home visitation by kindergarten teachers, generally who will serve as the child's kindergarten teacher.

There are three components of this strategy: 1.) public awareness, 2.) home visitation, 3.) end of program field trip to the EdVenture Children's Museum in Columbia.

Program results:

- 40 preschool children served by four (4) kindergarten teachers
- Over one-half of the participants participated in field trips to the local public library.

- Before and after parental involvement surveys provided the following results:
- 11% increase in the amount of conversational time parents spent with their child
- 29% increase in the amount of play time spent with child
- 37% increase in the amount of time spent reading to and with child
- 37% increase in the amount of time parents spent talking about letters, words, or numbers with child.

This partnership with the teachers of the Darlington County School District is one of our most successful strategies and was expanded through the award of financial assistance from the federally-funded Early Reading First grant.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

\$426,720

Expenditures By Funding Source	
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 10</i>)	\$ 288,783
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 55</i>)	\$ 13,001
Lottery Appropriation (<i>Fund 35</i>)	\$ -0-
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 60</i>)	\$ 13,500
C.O.E. Appropriation (<i>Fund 65</i>)	\$ -0-
N.F.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 70</i>)	\$ -0-
State Private (<i>Fund 15</i>)	\$ 304
Local Private (<i>Fund 20</i>)	\$ 11,839
Federal (<i>Fund 30</i>)	\$ 98,522
In-Kind (<i>Fund 25</i>)	\$ 771
TOTAL:	\$ 426,720

Expenditures by Program / Strategy Name	
Childcare Training and Professional Development	\$ 32,240
Scholarship Initiatives	\$ 45,000
Parents As Teachers	\$ 58,332
Dolly Parton Imagination Library	\$ 7,973
Full Day 4-K – CDEPP - Private	\$ 13,500
Full Day 4-K - Public	\$ 84,096
Summer Program	\$ 46,523
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$ 5,323

Childcare Quality Enhancement	\$ 43,639
	\$
	\$
	\$
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$ 58,956
Administrative Functions	\$ 31,138
TOTAL: \$426,720	



NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Anderson Brass Company	\$ 2,700.00
Kaplan School Supplies	\$ 500.00
King's Kids Child Development Center	\$ 760.00
Pee Dee Electric Cooperative	\$ 3,500.00
Darlington County DSN Board	\$ 310.00
Audrey Tripp, Board Member	\$ 270.00
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
TOTAL: \$ 8,040.00	

Local Match Percentage for FY 2008: 39%

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Arthur, Edward, Transportation provider
Gloria Brand, Legislative appointee
Douglas Bramlett, Parent of preschool child served by First Steps
Sandi Campbell, Early Childhood Education
Coe, Evelyn, Healthcare Provider
Graham, Linda, Early Childhood Education
Herrington, Winfred, Department of Social Services appointee
Hogan, Audrey, Early Childhood Education
Jerry, Lurline, Family education, training, and support provider

Johnson, Ella, Legislative appointee
Moore, Jacqueline, Darlington County School District
Patterson, Evelyn, Darlington County Head Start
Robinson, Georgia, Healthcare Provider
Roots, Monica, Healthcare Provider
Sansbury, Vanessa, Family education, training, and support services
Stokes, Shari, Pre-kindergarten through primary educator
Sutton, Autistine R., Childcare and early childhood development/education provider
Tripp, Audrey, Darlington County Library
White, Wiley, Faith community
Williams, Rujon G., Board Chair, Non-profit organization that provides services to families and children

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY08, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

Darlington County remains committed to visioning a future where the total community is engaged in the process of developing a strategic plan which correlates with other initiatives in the state and brings together a plethora of school readiness resource providers. One of the goals of our Partnership is to successfully compete for alternative funding and to become a United Way-designated agency. Achieving these goals will allow our Partnership to increase the level of support currently offered to our childcare partners and parents of preschool children.

2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Darlington County

Total Children Under Six: 5,306

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%

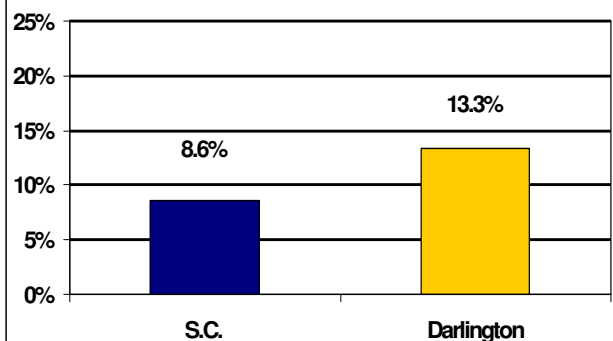
Darlington County (2007): 13.3%

Fast Fact: 1 in 8 Darlington County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

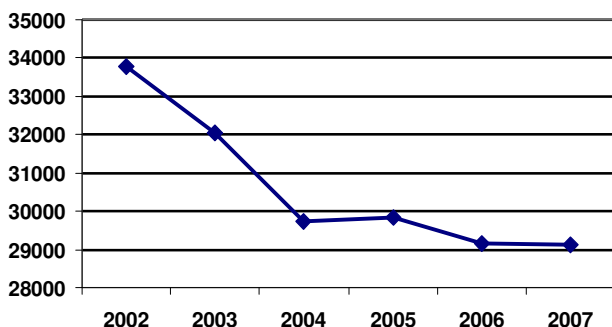
Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.

706 of Darlington County’s 5,306 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.

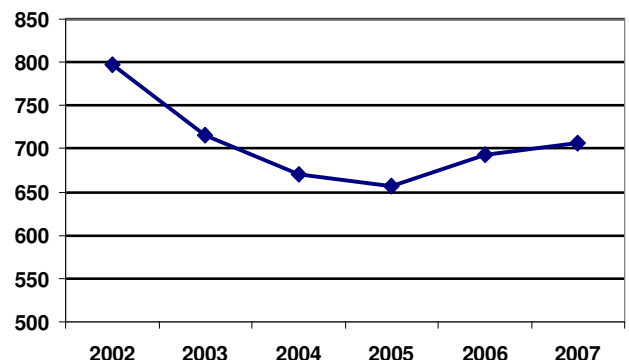
Children Under Age 6 Receiving TANF Benefits
(August 2007)



South Carolina Children Under Age 6
Receiving TANF Benefits
2002-2007



Darlington Children Under Age 6
Receiving TANF Benefits
2002-2007



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Darlington County

Total Children Under Six: 5,306

CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

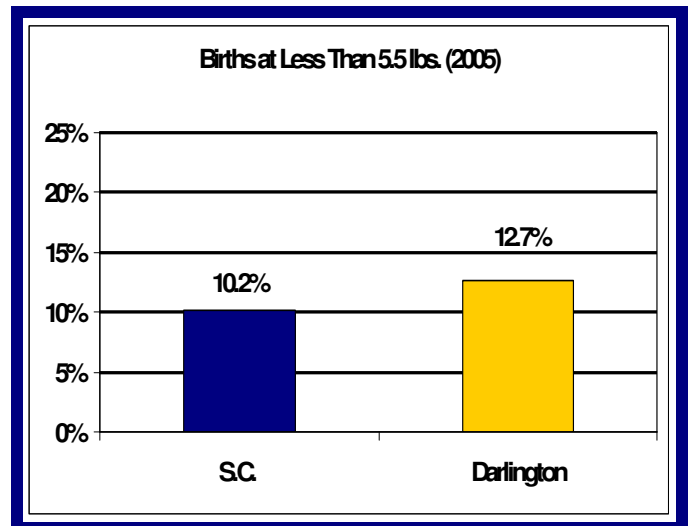
Darlington County (2005): 12.7%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 8 Darlington County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the "below basic" level (PACT) by third grade.

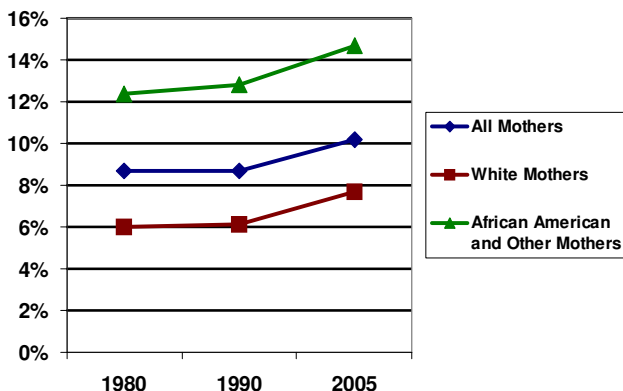
Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.

Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.

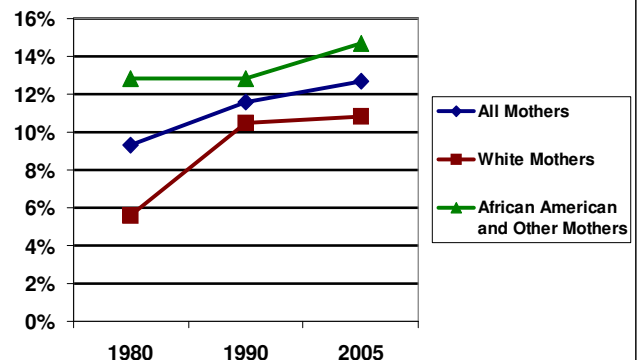
107 of the 841 children born in Darlington County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



South Carolina Births at Less than 5.5 lbs.



Darlington County Births at Less than 5.5 lbs.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Darlington County

Total Children Under Six: 5,306

BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%

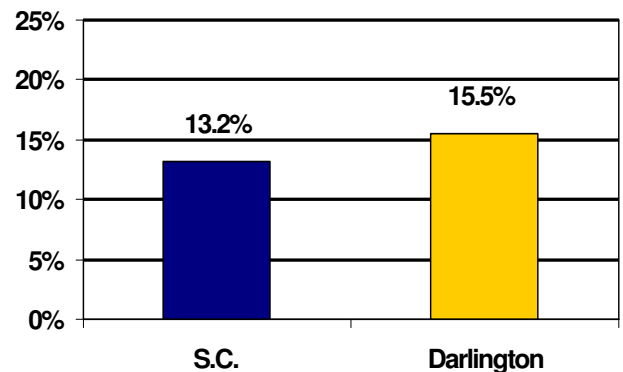
Darlington County (2005): 15.5%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 6 Darlington County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

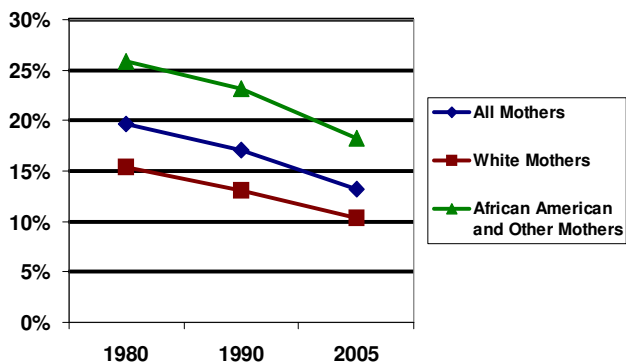
Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.

130 of the 841 children born in Darlington County during 2005 had teenage mothers.

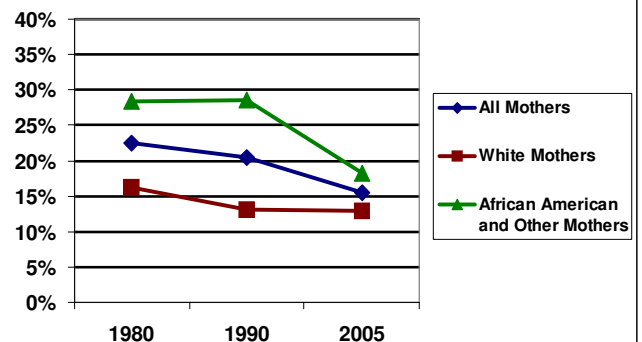
Births to Teenage Mothers (2005)



South Carolina Births to Teenage Mothers



Darlington County Births to Teenage Mothers



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Darlington County

Total Children Under Six: 5,306

BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%

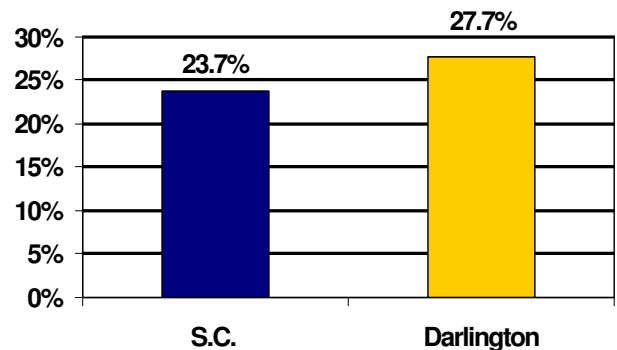
Darlington County (2005): 27.7%

Fast Fact: Just over 1 in 4 children in Darlington County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

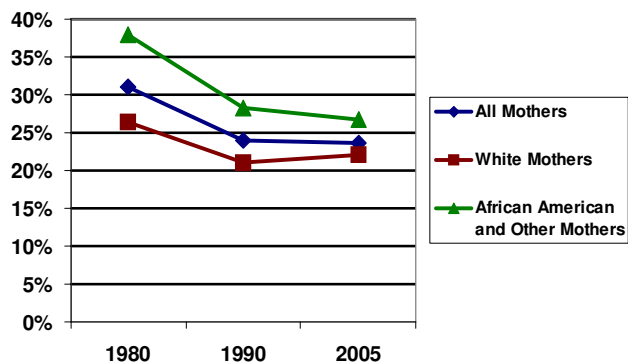
Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.

233 of the 841 children born in Darlington County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.

Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma (2005)



SC Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma



Darlington County Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma

